



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

November 3, 2005

Governor Robert Ehrlich
Office of the Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Ehrlich:

I am writing to ask for your assistance in ensuring that seniors and other vulnerable residents do not suffer from a lack of heat this winter. As you know, high energy costs have plagued consumers for most of this year and economists are predicting that natural gas and home heating oil costs could reach record high levels this winter. Therefore, we need to act now to ensure that additional resources are available for our most vulnerable residents.

Specifically, I am asking that you work to substantially increase funding for Maryland's home energy assistance program. Last week the U.S. Senate failed to approve additional federal funding to address rising home energy costs so I'm asking for your assistance in meeting this critical need. An increase from last year's allocation will ensure that Marylanders have the resources needed to keep from having to choose between heat for their homes and food for their families.

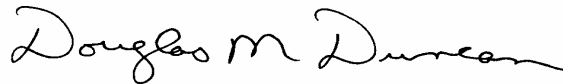
Montgomery County currently supplements resources provided by the Maryland State Office of Home Energy (OHEP) to provide energy assistance support for those in need. Today, I unveiled a plan that will increase by 100% the County's energy tax rebate program that assists seniors and others on limited incomes in paying their home heating bills.

In addition, I am proposing that we further help those dealing with the rising costs of living through an expansion of Montgomery County's Earned Income Tax Credit Program. I am requesting more than \$1 million in supplemental spending authority from the Montgomery County Council to provide an additional tax credit to families struggling to make ends meet. Coupled with the energy tax rebate proposal, this will go a long way towards helping people in need weather the coming winter financial storms.



I am sure that we share the common goal of wanting to provide the best possible services to the citizens of Maryland. I look forward to working with you to put the resources in place so that everyone, including our poorest and most vulnerable residents, stays warm this winter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas M. Duncan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Contact: Mary Anderson, 240-777-6534

For Immediate Release: November 3, 2005

**Duncan Outlines Plan to Increase
Energy Assistance to Low-Income Households
*Urges Governor to Provide Help to Vulnerable Residents***

County Executive Douglas M. Duncan today outlined a plan to expand Montgomery County's efforts to help low-income residents pay for rising home heating costs by doubling the energy tax rebate program and expanding the County's Earned Income Tax Credit program, the nation's first local EITC. Duncan made his announcement at the Silver Spring home of 69-year-old Gloria Lapkoff, a recipient of energy assistance funds. He was joined by County Councilmember Steve Silverman, Health and Human Services Chief of Behavioral Health and Crisis Services Daryl Plevy and Rev. Rosetta Robinson of Community Ministry of Montgomery County.

Duncan's plan would double the energy tax rebate amount, currently \$40, to further assist eligible Montgomery County households in paying their home heating bills. The plan also calls for an additional \$50 credit under the County's Earned Income Tax Credit program. The additional support for these efforts will cost \$1.3 million in local funds.

"No one should have to choose between heating their homes and feeding their families," said Duncan. "My plan is designed to help seniors and others living on limited incomes pay their home heating bills this winter."

In a letter sent today, Duncan called on Governor Robert Ehrlich to substantially increase State funding for the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) to ensure that Marylanders have the resources needed to keep pace with the rising costs of home heating oil and natural gas. Last year, more than 4,500 households in Montgomery County received MEAP assistance, and already this year nearly 4200 applications have been received. Officials expect the number of applications this year to far outpace last year's.

"We as a County need to do all that we can to prevent our most vulnerable residents from being unduly burdened by the rapid rise in home heating costs this winter," said County Councilmember Steve Silverman.

"Everyday, someone – a single mother, a disabled adult or a grandmother – facing a financial crisis calls our office asking for help to pay an overdue electric or gas bill," said Rev. Rosetta Robinson, Director of Congregation and Community Support Programs at Community Ministry of Montgomery County. "We know

they are living in the hard place of having to decide whether to use their limited dollars to pay the utility bill to keep the lights on or to pay the rent to keep their housing.”

For more information about the County’s energy assistance programs, which includes MEAP and the Electric Universal Service Program, as well as the Weatherization Program, which provides energy services to make a home more fuel efficient, and the Utility Service Protection Program, which protects households from utility disconnections by setting up a monthly payment plan, please call 240-777-4450.

Applications may also be picked up at the Department of Health and Human Services at 1301 Piccard Drive in Rockville or the Department’s sites at the Upcounty Regional Services Center, 12900 Middlebrook Road in Germantown and the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring.

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Attachment: Duncan letter to Ehrlich